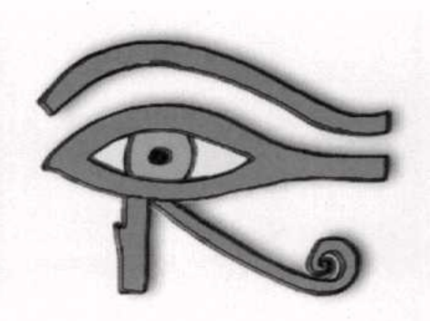


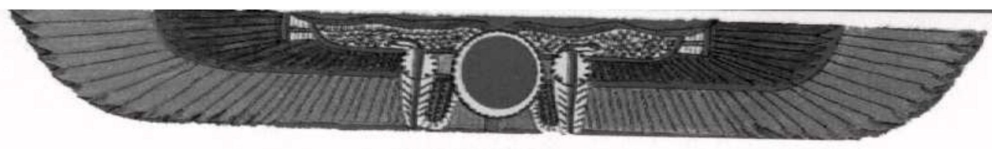
LUXOR & KARNAK

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First edition
Published by Amr Hussein Abdel Aal
Printed in Egypt
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LUXOR

A fascinating city which lies about seven hundred kilometers south of Cairo, Luxor had been Egypt's political and religious capital since the era of the mediate kingdom in the year 2000 B.C.

Luxor had first been named "WA-SET" meaning " scepter ". Then the name had changed to mean "the city" then to "southern Aoun" (Heliopolis had been "upper Aoun" at the time), then had become "Amoun city", the Greeks later had called it "Thebai" which had changed to "Tiba" or "Thebes", later the Arabs had called it Luxor.

When Herodotus had visited Luxor he had given a detailed description of it, naming it "the city with a hundred doors", he had also described the grandeur of its architecture as had been evident in its temples and monuments.

The city of Luxor lies on the eastern bank of the Nile river, it contains the most famous two temples of ancient Egypt, namely, Karnak temple and Luxor temple. The two temples had been connected by a road with rows on either side of ram headed sphinxes.

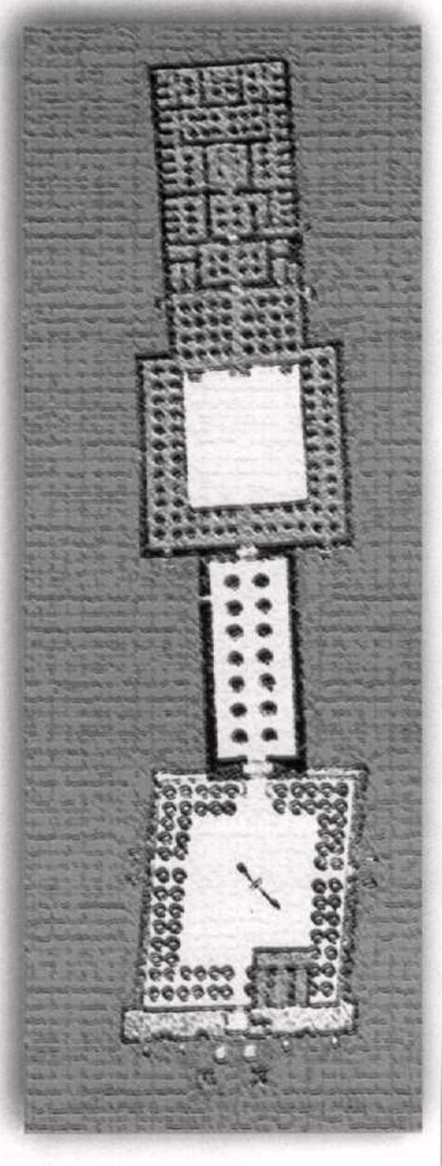
On the western side of the Nile river is the city of the dead, which contains some of the most important monuments in the world, most of those monuments are funerary temples which had been erected during the era of the new kingdom, of those the most important are "Ramesseum" which had been built by Ramses II and the temple of "Medinet Habu" which had been built during the reign of Ramses III.

Behind those two temple, the great kings of ancient Egypt had carved out their tombs in the side of the valley which had become "the valley of the kings". The most famous tomb had later been discovered, intact, that of king Tutankhamoun.

The nobility as well as the elite had also carved out their tombs in the western valley, tombs containing an abundance of monuments as well as works of art.

LUXOR TEMPLE

This temple dates back to king Amenhotep III of the 18th dynasty. King Amenhotep III had started erecting it, then, later his successors had added to it and completed it. The most important of those had been king Ramses II of the 19th dynasty.



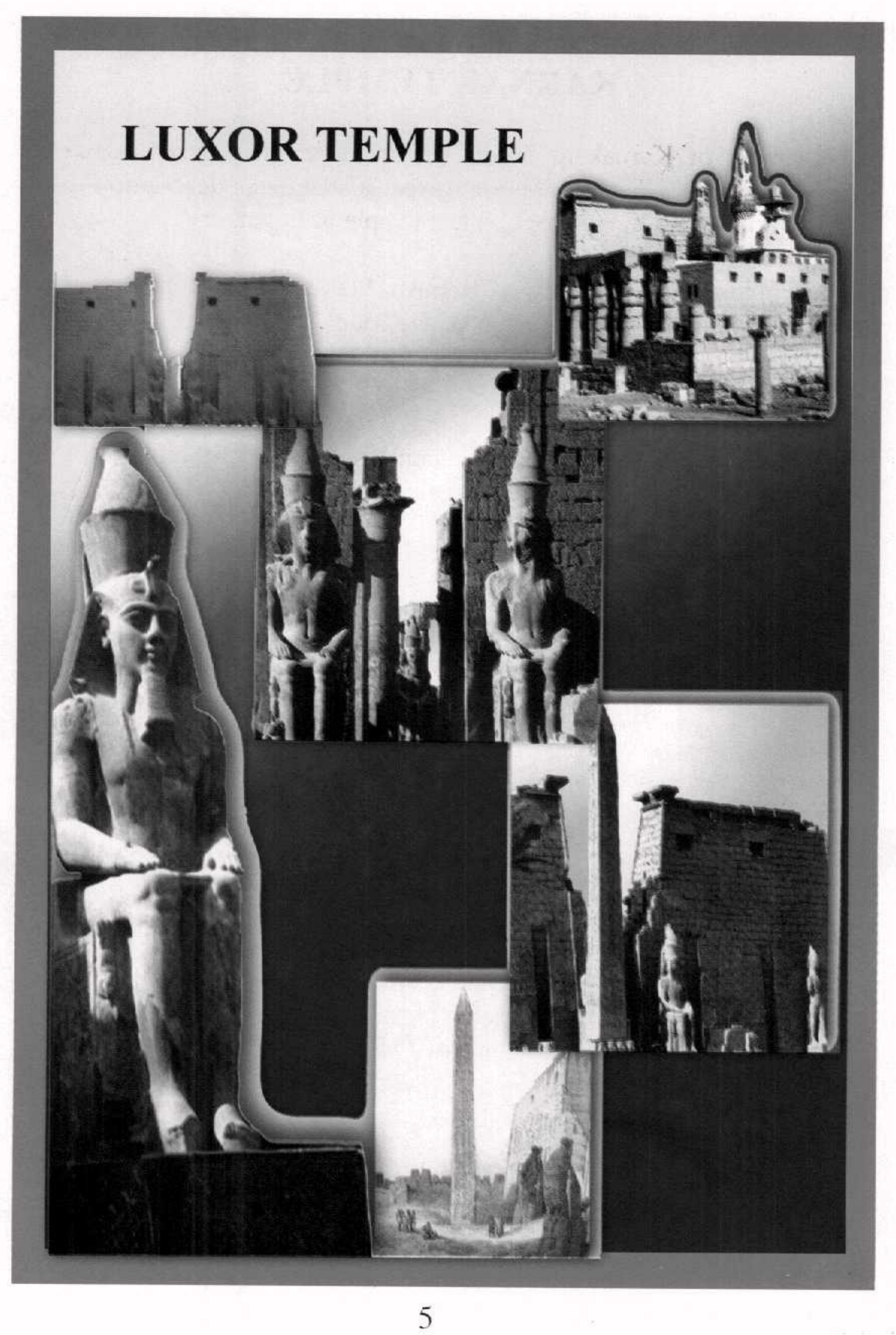
Luxor temple lies three kilometers south of Karnak temple, its entrance faces the northern side. The temple consists of the great pylon, in front of it are three statues of Ramses II which had originally been six. In front of those statues had been two obelisks, one of them now stands in the Concorde square in Paris.

The great pylon leads to the great court which had been erected by Ramses II, adjacent, to the right is a chamber dedicated to the worship of the holy triad Amoun, Mut and Khunso and which had been erected by Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III. This leads to a court containing fourteen columns which had been erected by Amenhotep III, Tutankhamoun and Hormhab.

The great court of Amenhotep III follows, it contains a double row of columns on three sides. Then there is the Hypostyle hall comprising huge columns.

Then there are several small chambers surrounding the sanctuary one of those is the birth room, which contains sketches depicting the birth of Amenhotep III. Then there is the sanctuary of Alexander the great which had been rebuilt by him as a token of his respect for ancient Egyptian gods.

LUXOR TEMPLE

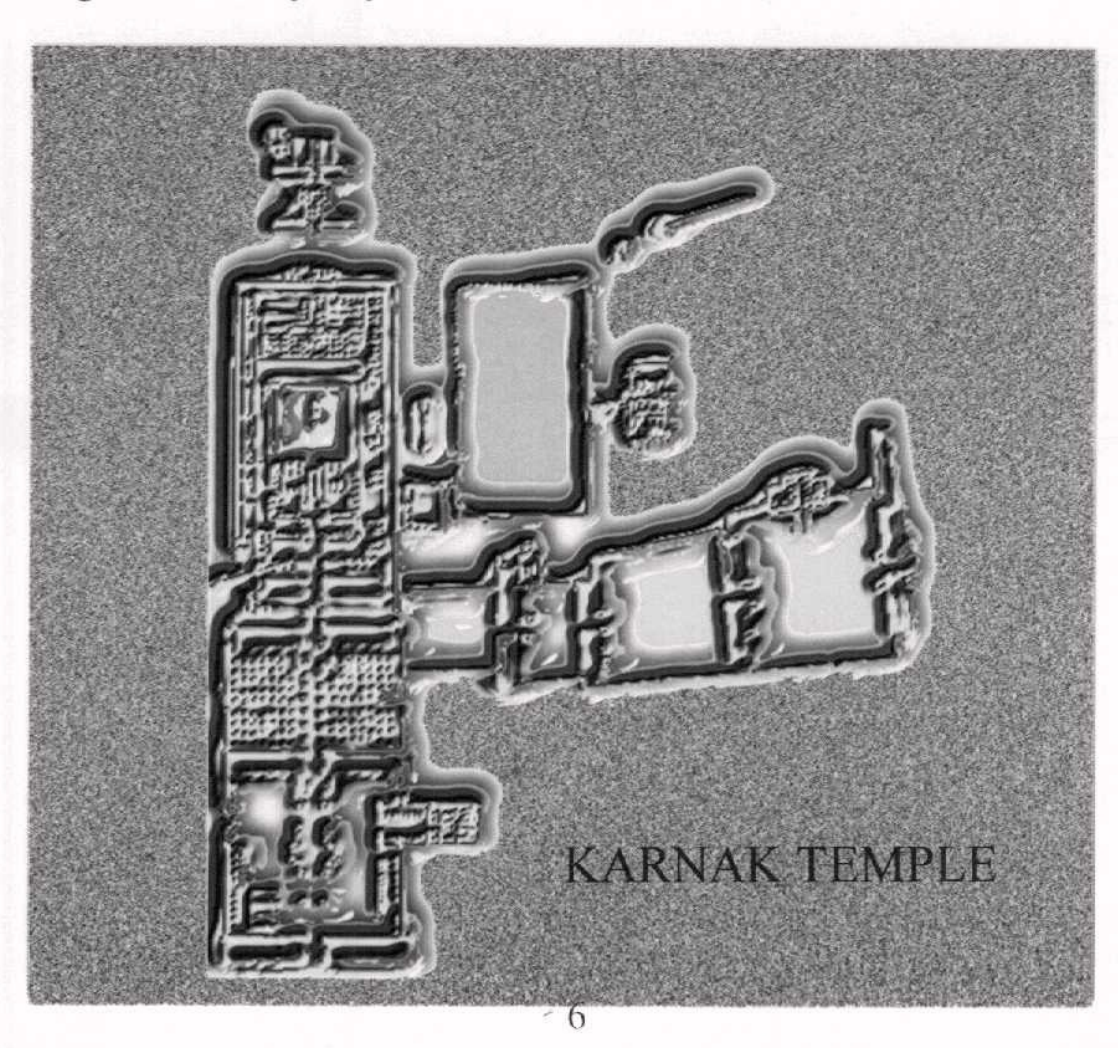


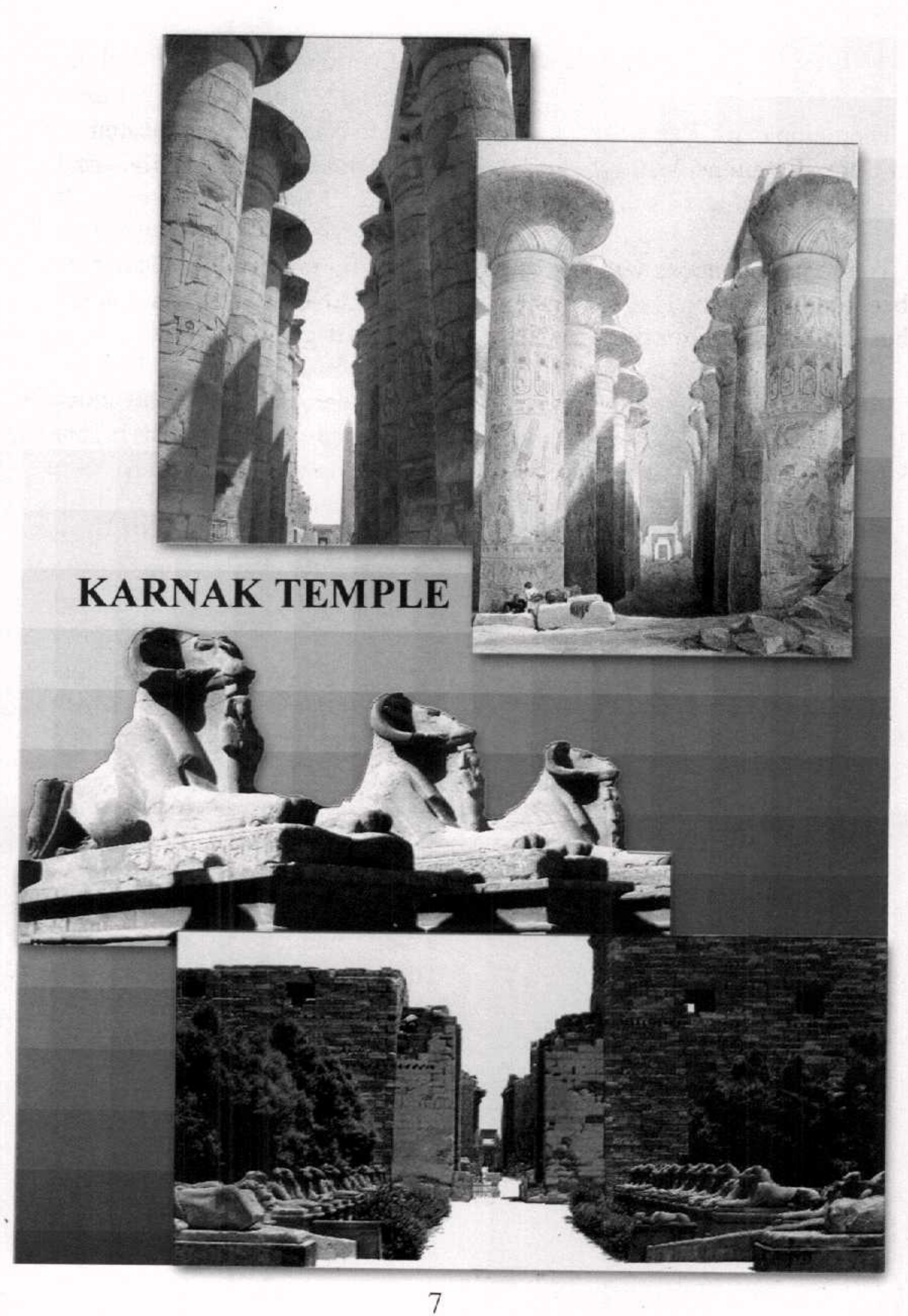
KARNAK TEMPLE

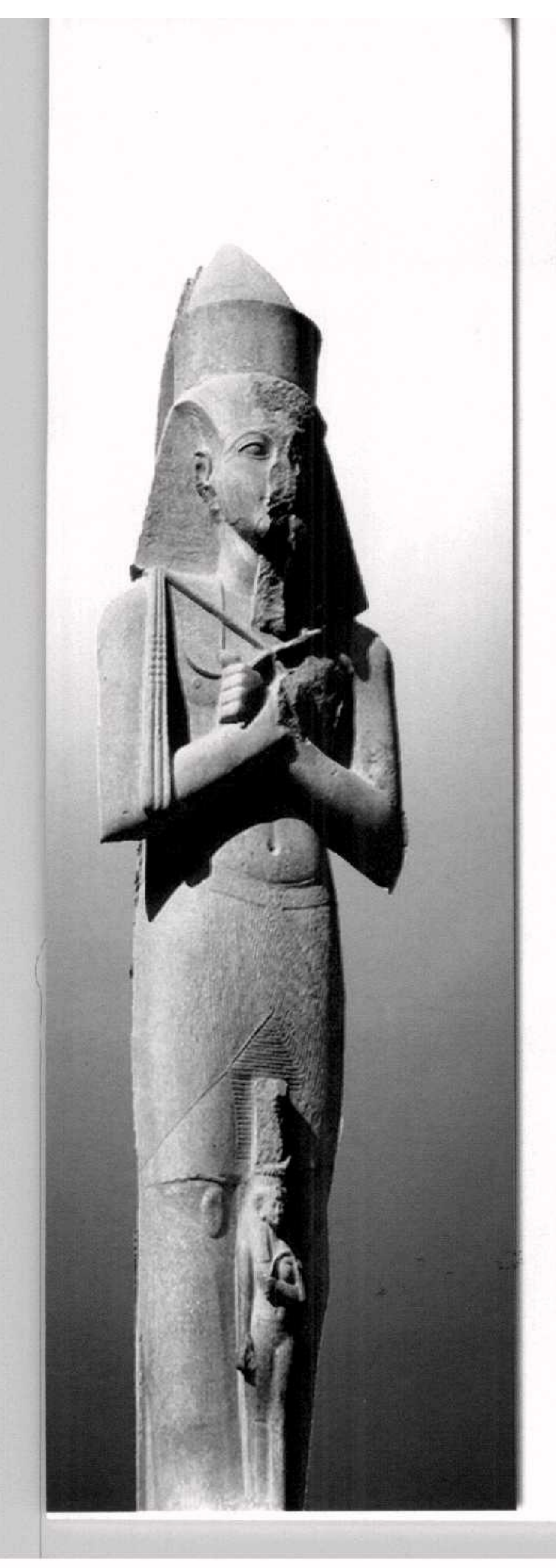
The temple of Karnak at Luxor is considered a natural museum of ancient Egyptian history, for it gives a detailed description of a flourishing era. It is by and for greatest temple in Egypt.

The temple contains temples of Khonsu, Ptah and Osiris, for it had not been dedicated solely for worship of the triad Amoun, Mut and Khonsu, but had been used for the worship of several other gods.

This temple goes back as for as the era of the mediate kingdom, it owes Its present shape, however, to the additions and contributions of the kings of the 18th dynasty as well as their successors.



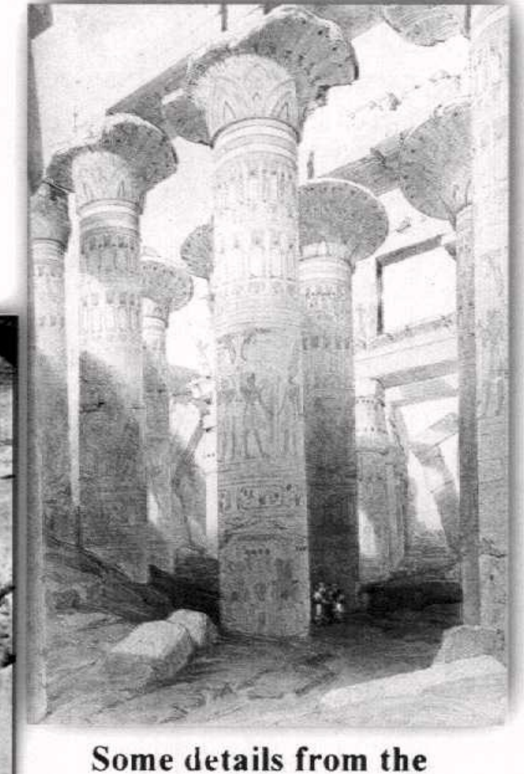

KARNAK TEMPLE

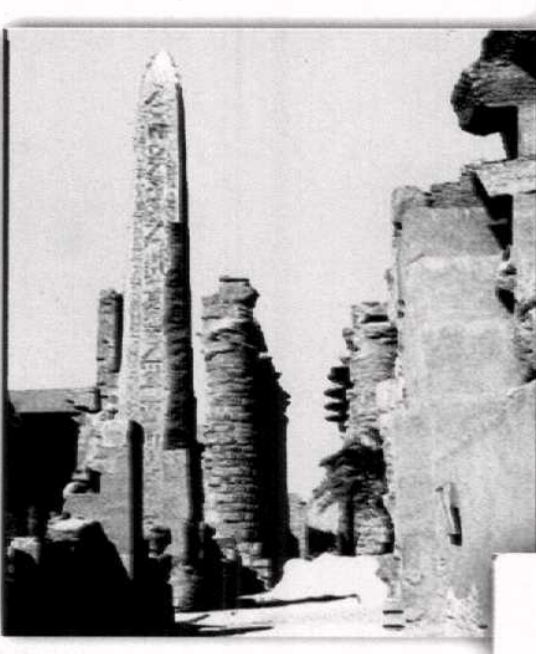


The temple lies three kilometers north of Luxor temple. It had been dedicated to the worship of the holy triad Amoun, Mut and Khonsu. It consists of a passage with two rows of ram-headed Sphinxes leading to the first pylon which dates back to the king Nekhtanbu I of the 30^{th} dynasty, then there is the great court which had been erected in the 22^{nd} dynasty by Shashanek, then on the right it contains a small temple built by Ramses III, then the second pylon leading to the great Hypostyle hall which had been erected by Seti I and later completed by Ramses II, this leads to the third pylon which had been erected by Amenhotep III and which leads to and obelisk dating back to the reign of Hatshepsut.

We then have the fifth pylon which had been erected by Tuthmosis I, then the sixth pylon which had been erected by TuthmosisIII and which leads to the hall of records which contains two stately granite pillars, one bearing the lotus symbol of upper Egypt, the other bearing the papyrus symbol of lower Egypt.

Then there follows some chambers and the sanctuary. The temple also contains a sacred lake. The ministry of culture helps in depicting, this temple in full by means of a very detailed show of sound and light.





Some details from the Karnak temple

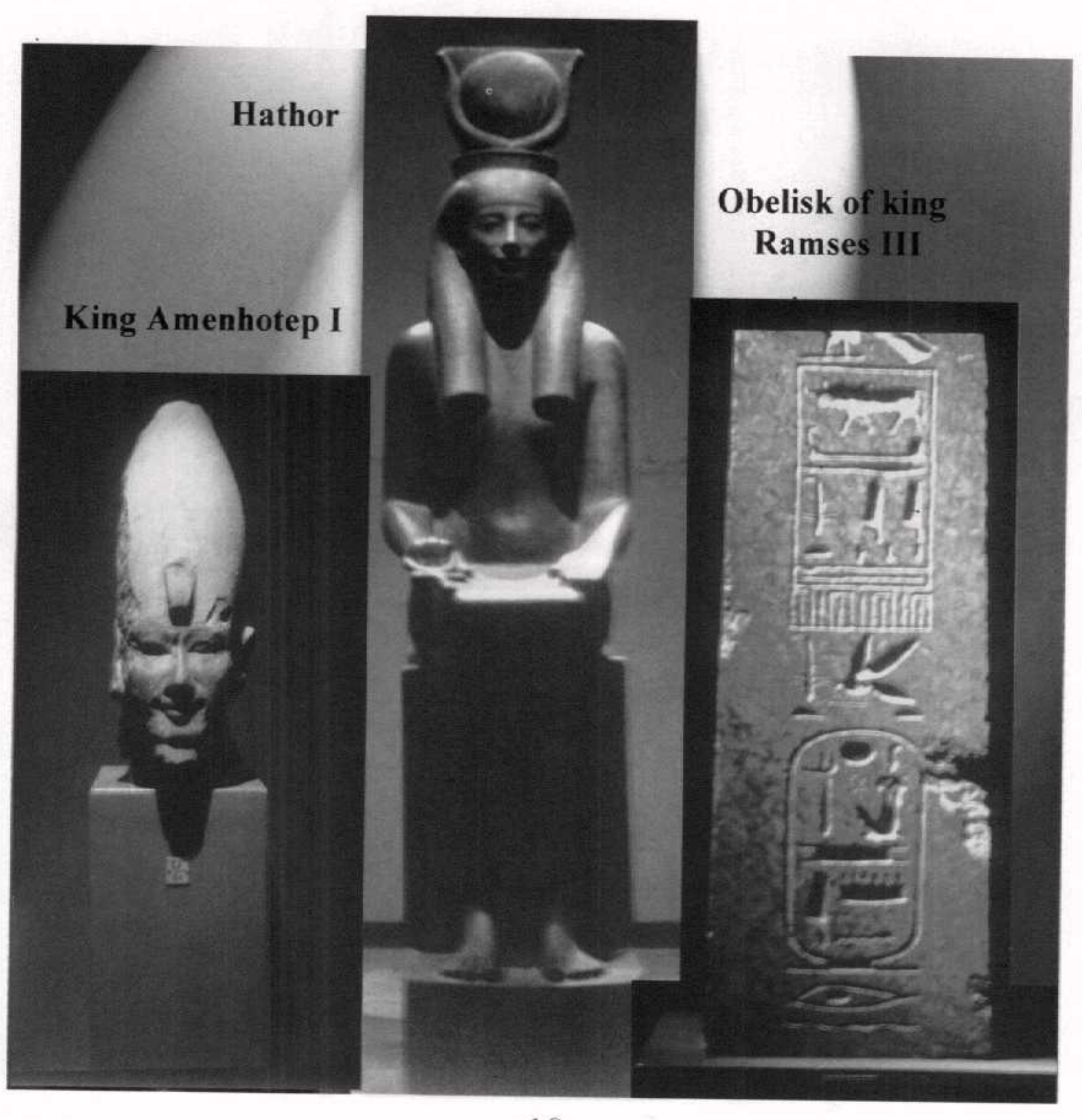


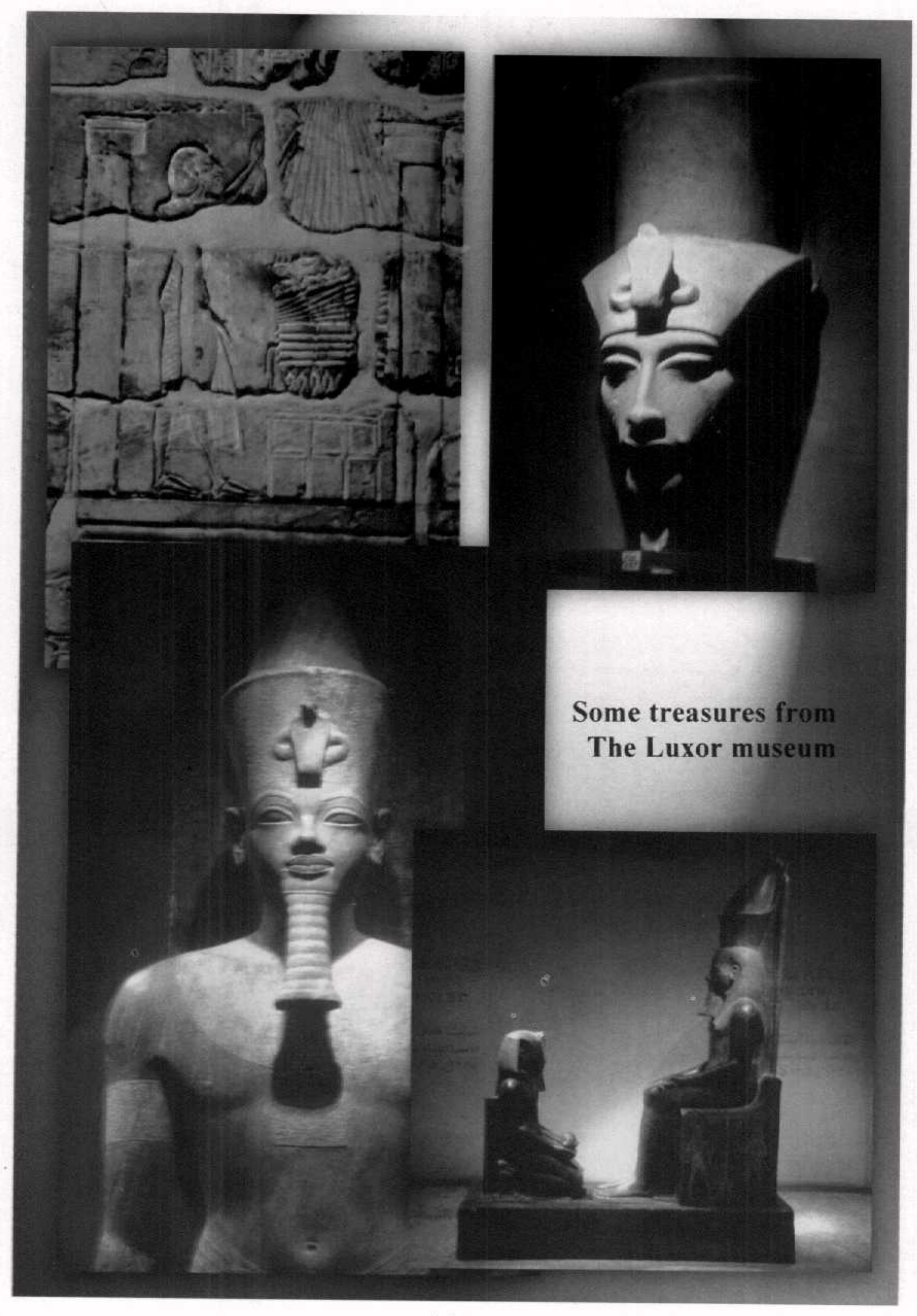


LUXOR MUSEUM

The Luxor museum lies between the temple of Karnak and the temple of Luxor on the eastern bank of the Nile. It had been inaugurated in December 1975. The museum offers the visitor entertainment due to the artistic display of its exhibits.

The museum displays exhibits dating from the B.C. period till the Islamic period. A visit to the Luxor museum is therefore a must on every visitor's itinerary.



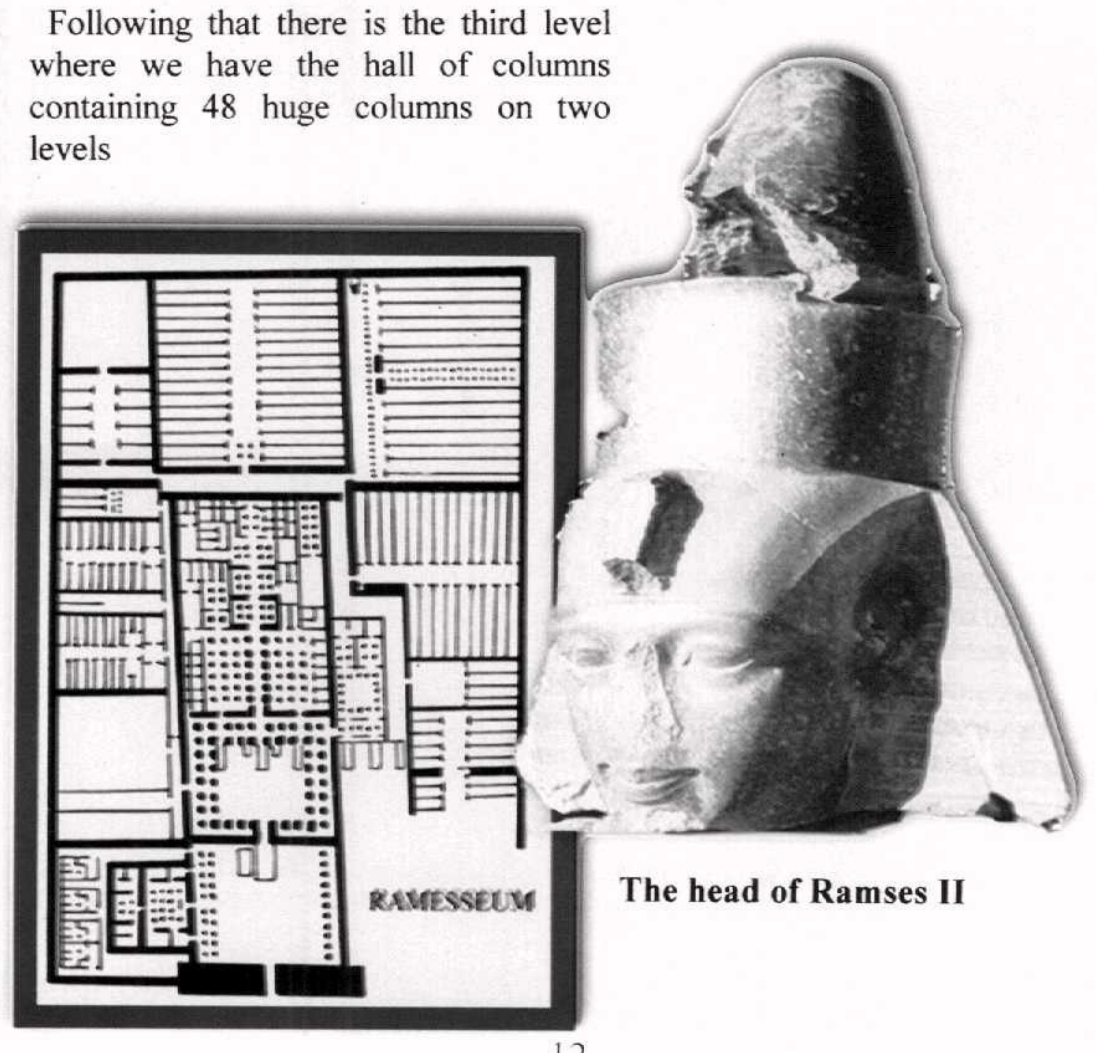

Some treasures from
The Luxor museum

RAMESSEUM

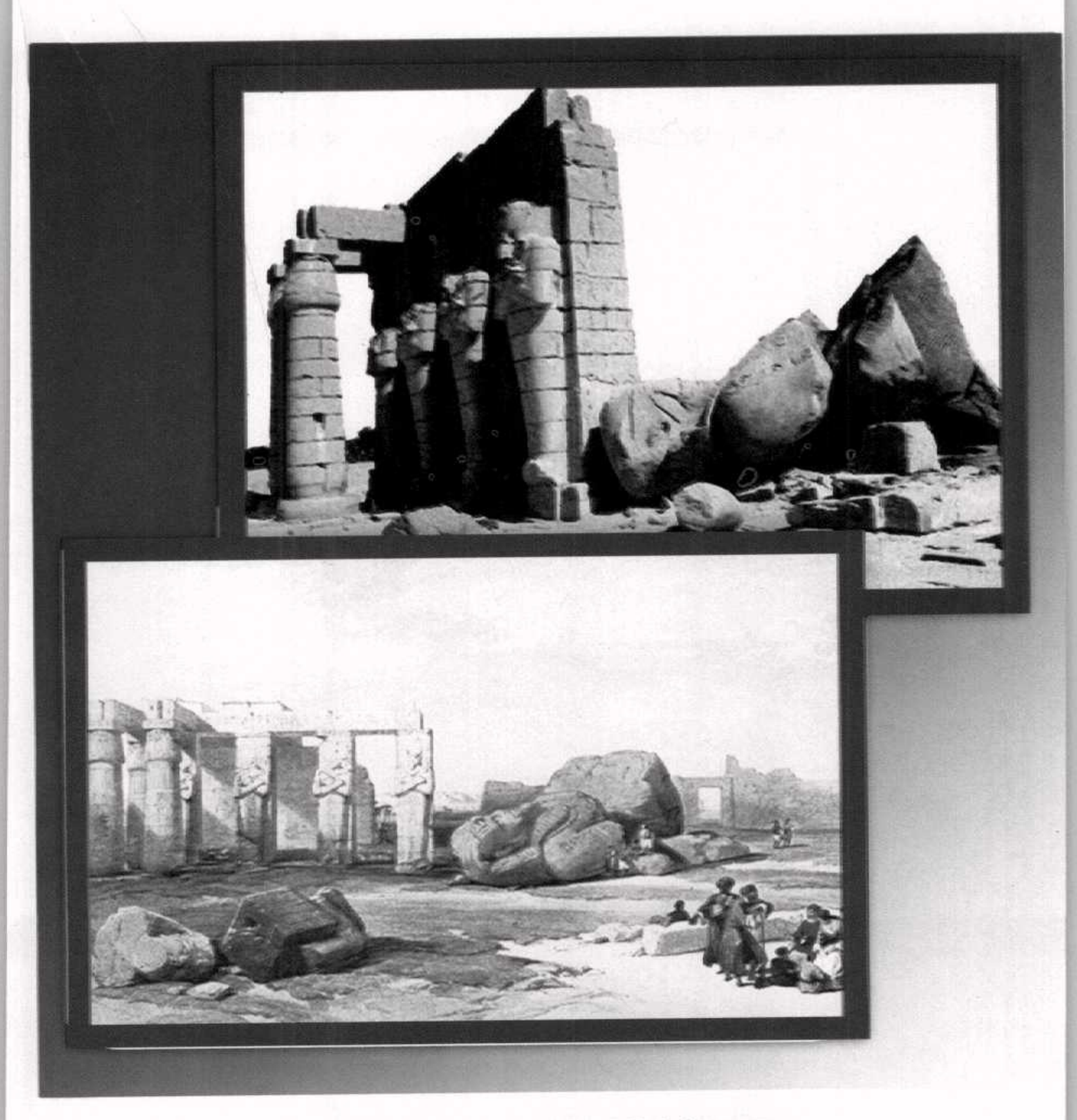
This temple had been built by Ramses II of the 19th dynasty. Although a large part of it has been ruined, yet, the remains tell of its past grandeur.

The entire structure lies within a girdle wall. It consists of an entrance pylon leading to the first court (mostly in ruin), then the second court which is a better state. There is, then, a second pylon on which there are inscriptions showing Ramses II in battle. Then a hall on a higher level containing columns in the shape of Osiris as well as others in the shape of the papyrus plant.

Following that there is the third level where we have the hall of columns containing 48 huge columns on two levels

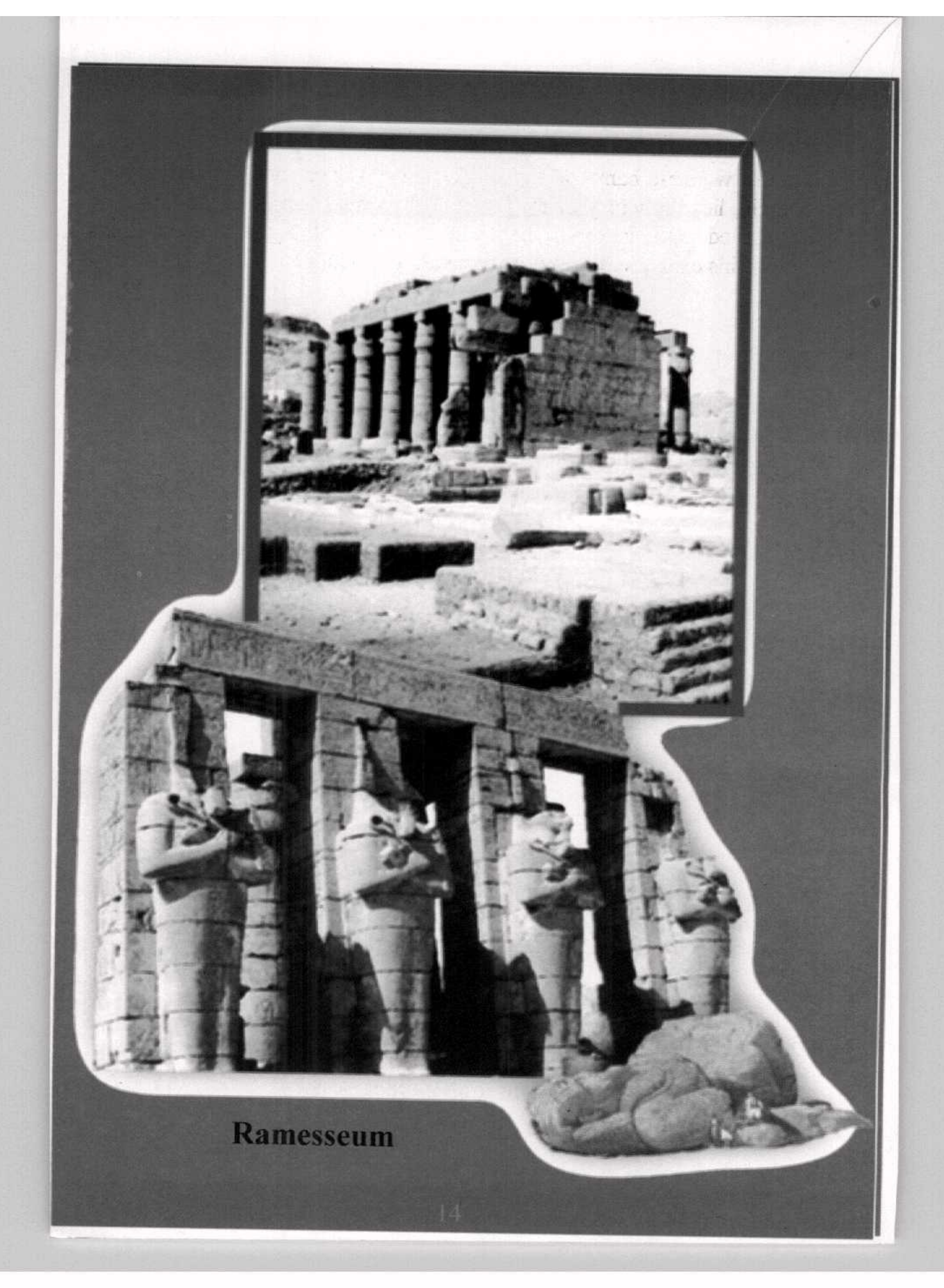


The head of Ramses II



Ramesseum and the four Osiris statues

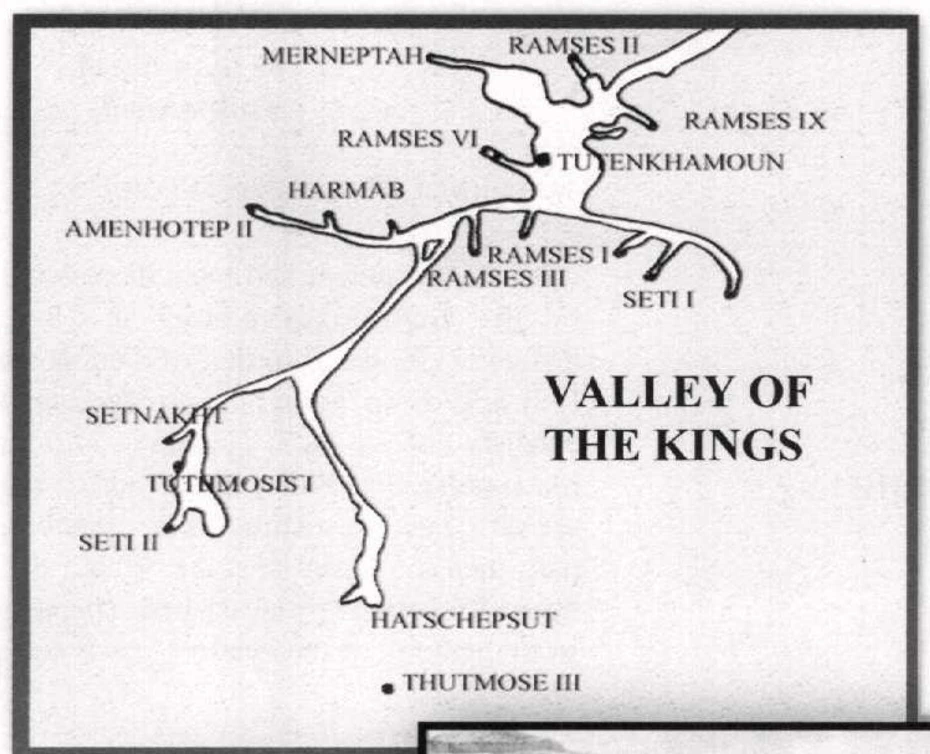
So as to allow the light to pass through the ceiling. This leads to several chambers and halls and the sanctuary. Of the most important remaining relies are parts of a huge statue of Ramses II.



Ramesseum

THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS

On the western bank of the Nile, facing Luxor, and behind a high mountain, lies the valley of the kings. Tuthmosis I had been the first king who carved out his tomb there. Later many of Egypt's great kings followed his example, thus giving the valley its name.



The map of the valley of the kings



Valley of the kings by David Roberts

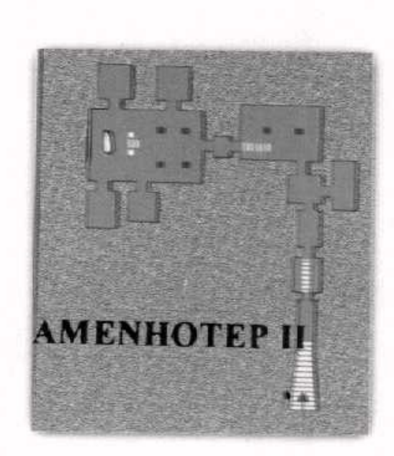
The tomb of Tuthmosis I (No 38)

The tomb of Tuthmosis I is the oldest one in the valley of the kings. It had been built by his architect Anini. It consists of slanting steps, a path, a square chamber and a simply designed burial chamber.

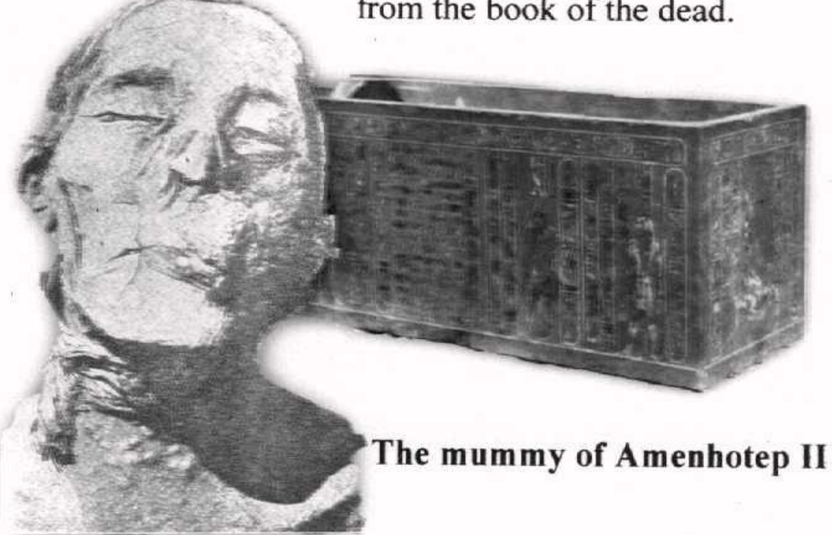


The mummy of Tuthmosis I

The tomb of Amenhotep II (No 35)



This tomb, which had been discovered by the archeologist Laurier in 1898, differs in design from that of Tuthmosis I. It had been built on two axels and consists of a path leading into a rectangular chamber, which leads to the second axel consisting of a chamber, path then the burial chamber which had been decorated by inscribed chapters from the book of the dead.



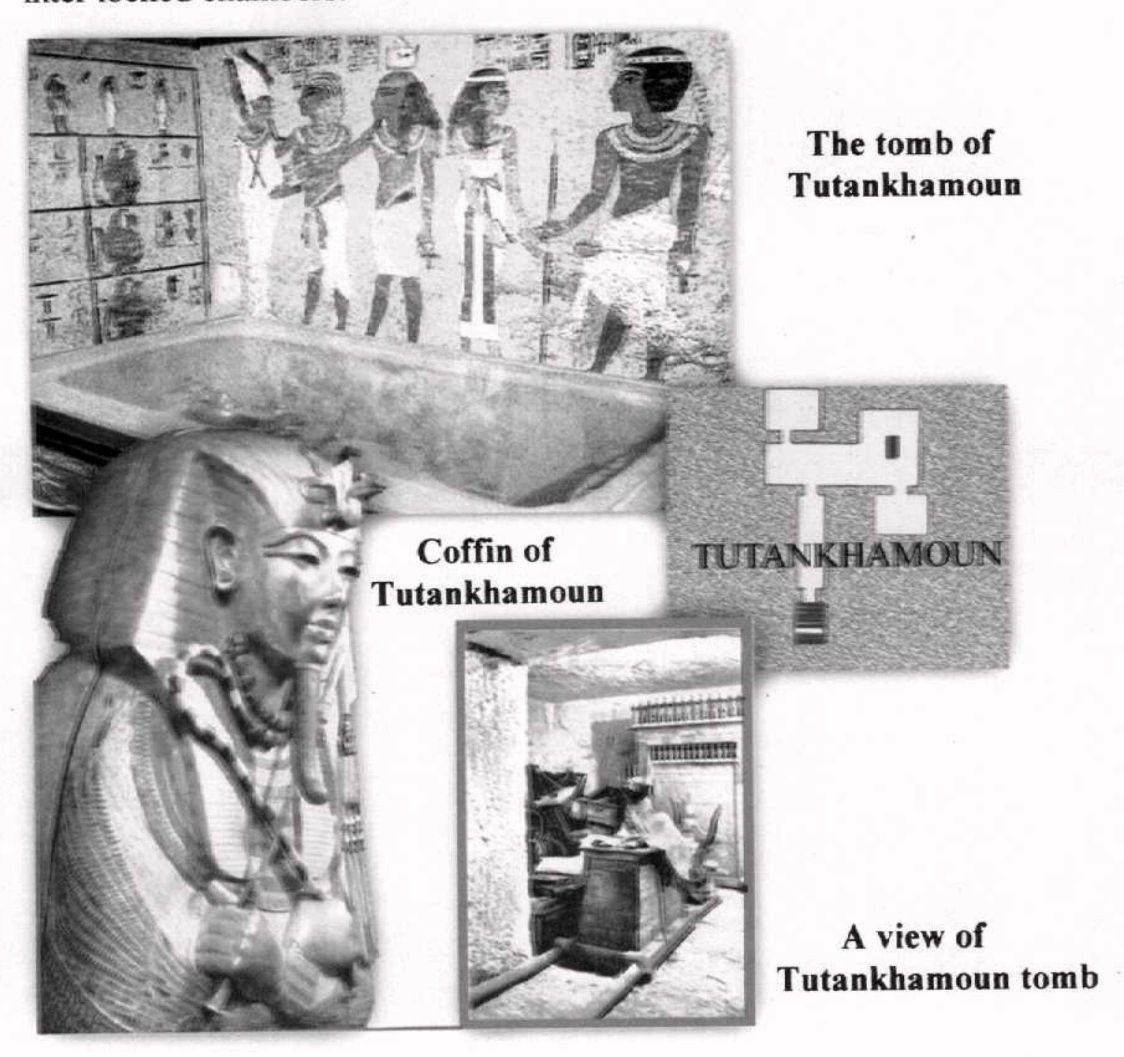
The mummy of Amenhotep II

The tomb of Tutankhamoun (No 62)

This tomb is one of the most important tombs in the valley of the kings. It owes its fame to the fact that it had been looted, but had remained intact until it had been later discovered by Carter in 1922.

The tomb itself is simple in structure. It consists of steps leading to a path, then a which wise chamber containing a side chamber.

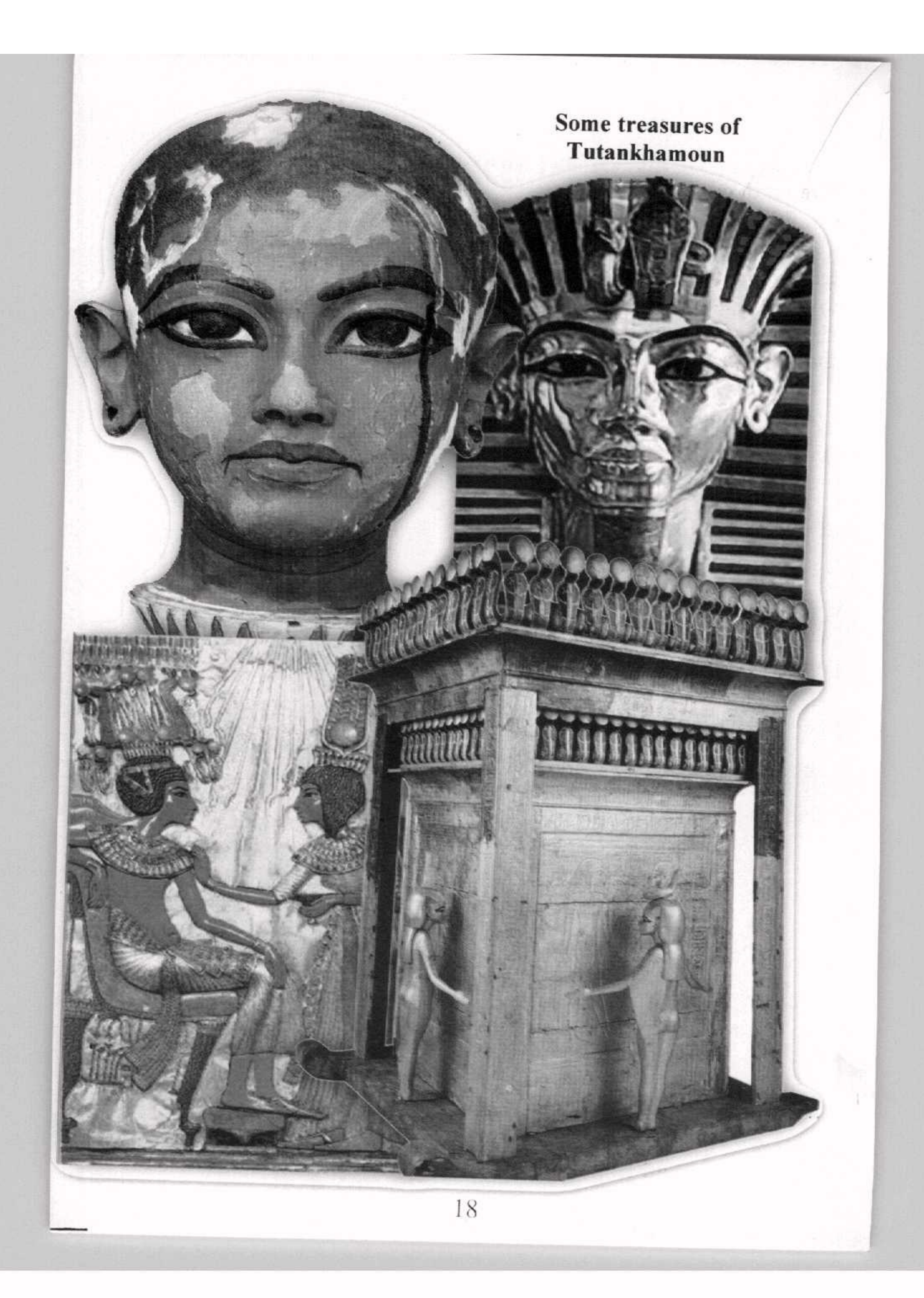
Among the priceless contents of his tomb are his funerary furniture and his very famous gold mask. The royal coffin had been placed in four inter locked chambers.



The tomb of Tutankhamoun

Coffin of Tutankhamoun

A view of Tutankhamoun tomb



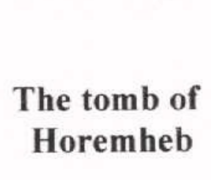
Some treasures of Tutankhamoun

The tomb of Horemheb (No 57)

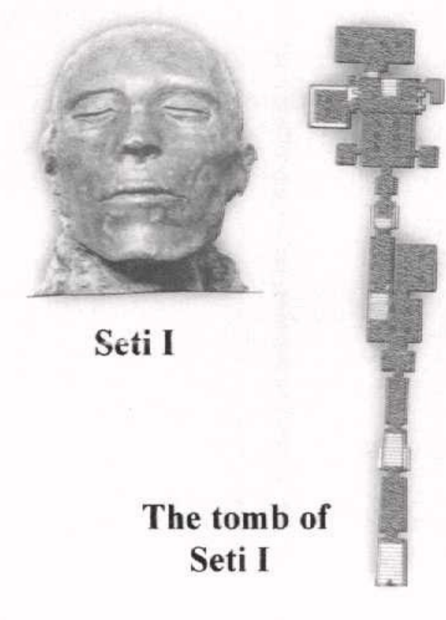
The last king of the eighteenth dynasty. This tomb was discovered by the Egyptologist Davied in 1908. It had been carved in the form of two axels on different levels. The tomb consists of paths leading to a chamber containing a well then to a chamber where other paths lead to the burial chamber.



The god Anubis- tomb of horemheb



The tomb of Horemheb



Seti I

The tomb of Seti I

The tomb of Seti I (No 17)

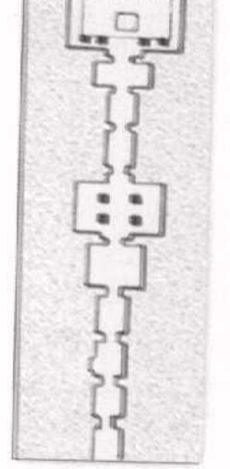
This is considered the grandest as well as the greatest of the tombs in the valley of the kings. It contains an abundance of inscriptions and beautiful drawings. It is quite a long tomb for it measures 98 meters in length. It is similar in design to that of Horemheb. The most important inscriptions are the astronomical signs on the ceiling of the burial chamber.



Some inscriptions from the tomb of Seti I

The tomb of Ramses VI (No 9)

This tomb is 93 meters in length, it lies above that of Tutankhamoun. Its significance lies in the abundance of religious inscriptions it contains. The tomb consists of several paths and chambers leading to the burial chamber.



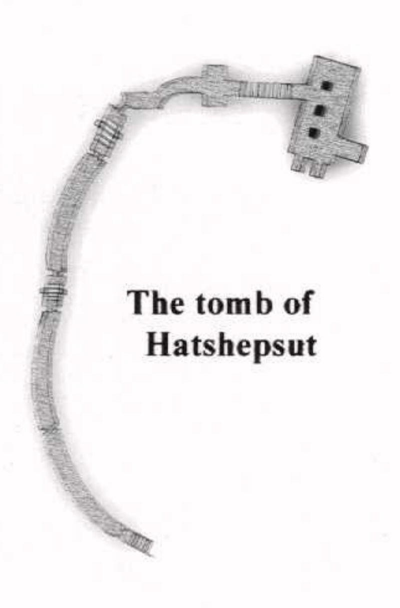
The tomb of Ramses VI



The tomb of Hatshepsut (No 20)

It consists of four passages which joined Together, form 213 meters leading to the burial chamber, in a depth of 97 meters.

The tomb is in the shape of a semi-circle due to the rottenness of the stone it had been dug into. For it was supposed to have been inclined in shape so as to fall under the chamber of "Amoun great of Awe" which is located in her temple. But the rottenness of the stone had forced the people in charge of the digging to form a curve to avoid a total cave in.



The tomb of Hatshepsut



The tomb had been discovered in the year 1903 by the Egyptologists Davies and Carter. They had discovered the queen's coffin and gut box on exhibit now at the Egyptian museum. Her mummy however had not been found within,



VALLEY OF THE QUEENS

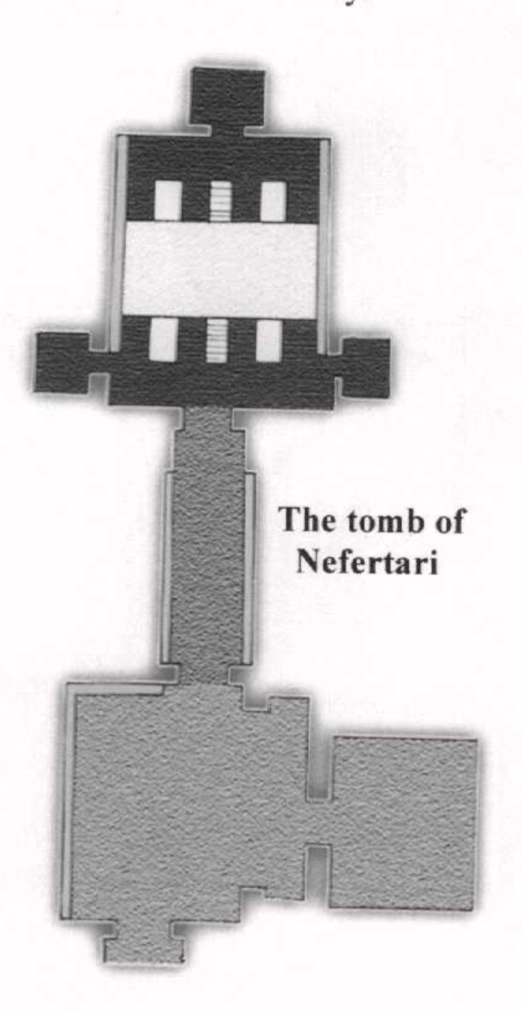
A valley which lies south of the Thebes cemetery and which had been named "Ta-Set-Nefru " or " the beautiful place ". Valley of the queens had been place for the queens, princes and princesses of the nineteenth and twentieth dynasties and goes far back as the seventeenth dynasty, it contains a total of seventy tombs. Several tombs in that valley lack the usual paintings and inscriptions and long passages; as the limestone nature of that area had made it impossible. Most of the tombs contain a hall and a burial chamber which contains pillars. The tombs are very modest in comparison to those of the valley of the kings.

The tomb of Nefertari (No 66) is the most famous in the valley.

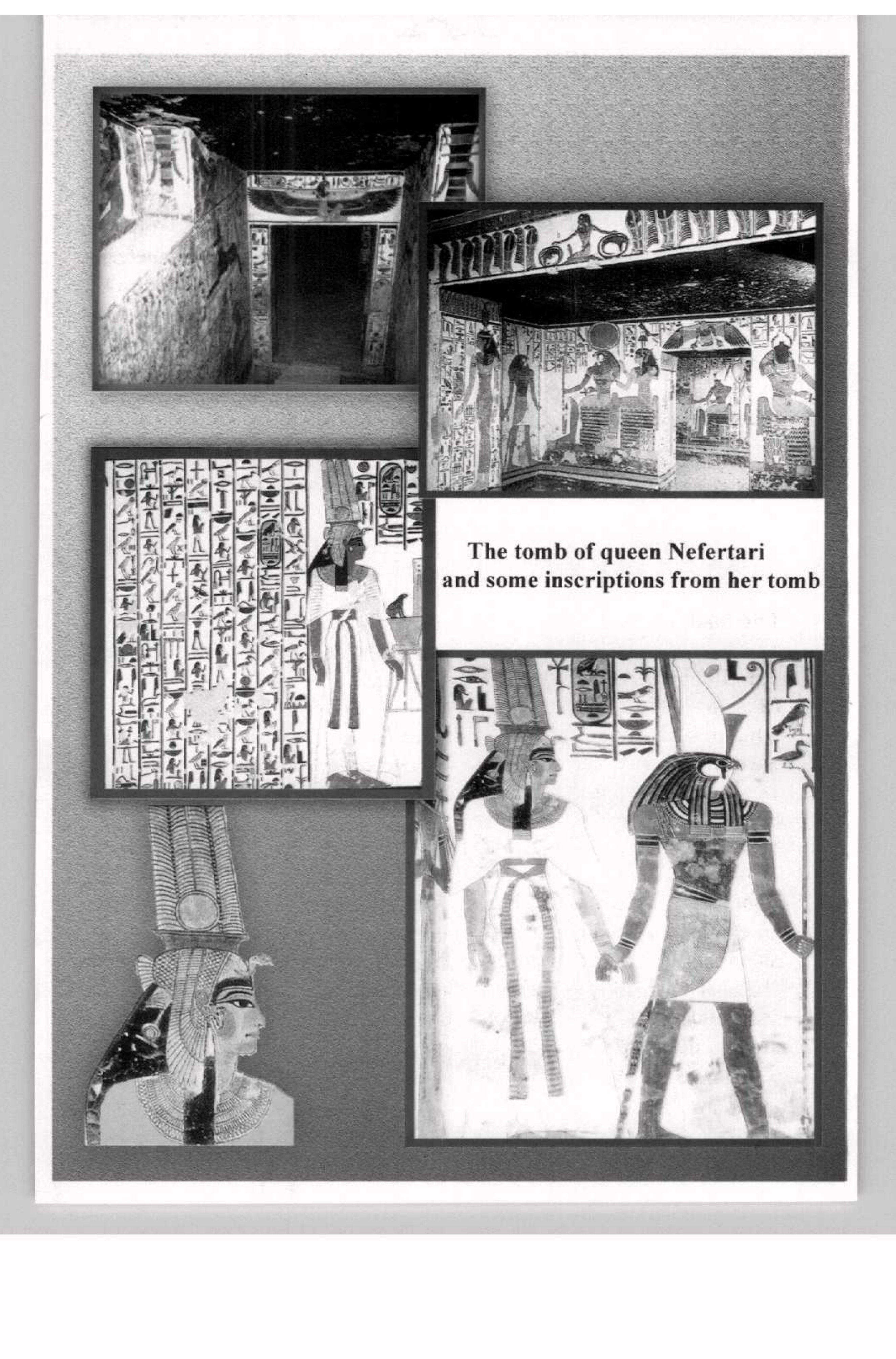
The tomb of Nefertari (No 66)

In 1904 the Italian Egyptologist Ernesto Schiaparlli discovered the tomb of Nefertari in the valley of the queens. The is a very beautiful one; as it contains an abundance of beautiful, colorful inscriptions, rarely found in any other cemetery.

The tomb of Nefertari consists of an entrance hall with a side chamber and stairs leading down to the burial chamber which comprises three small side chambers. The tomb is a simply designed one like most of those in the valley of the queens.



The tomb of Nefertari


The tomb of queen Nefertari
and some inscriptions from her tomb

DEIR EL BAHARI

The tomb of Mentohotep

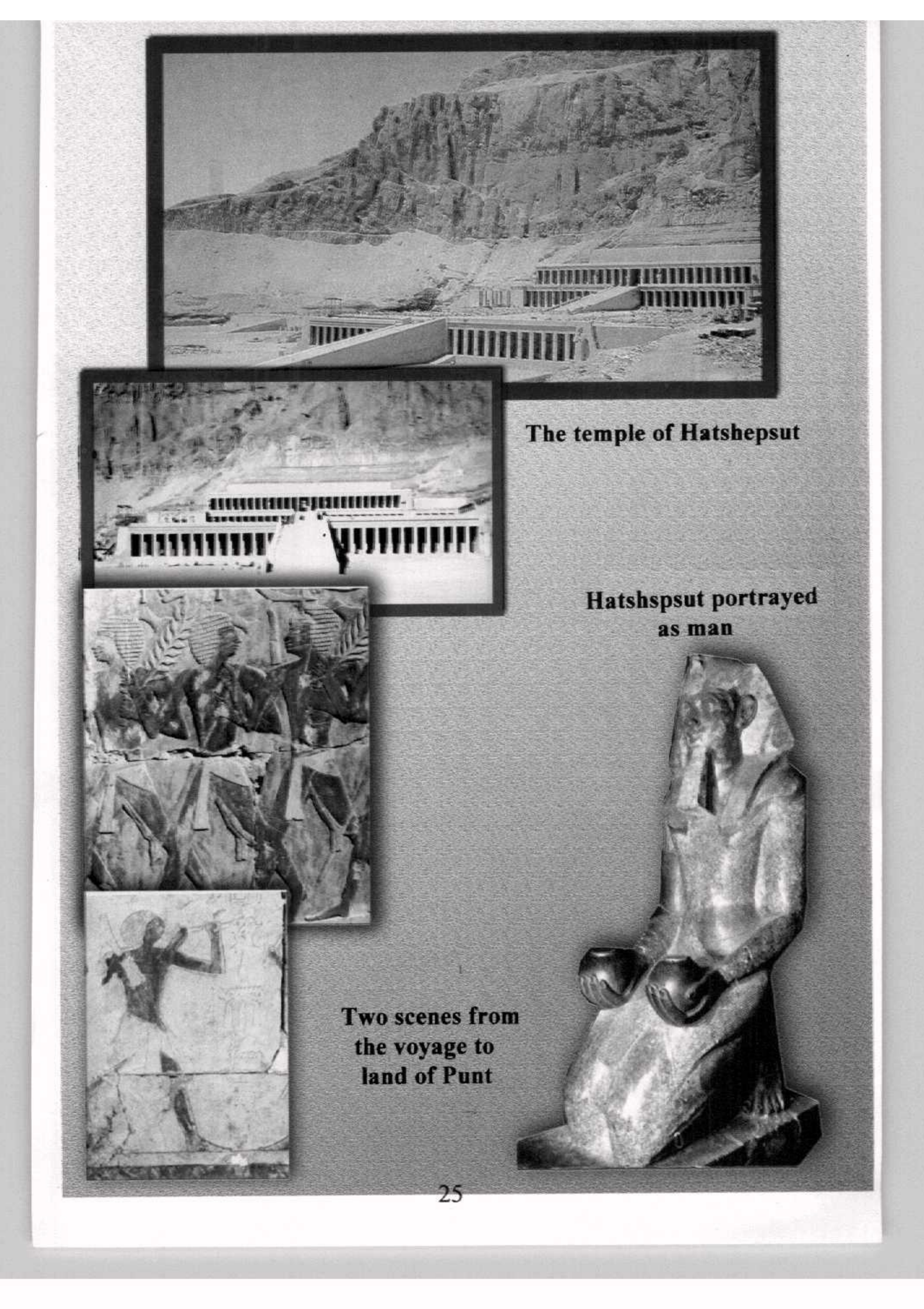
The tom of Mentohotep lies to the left of the temple of Hatshepsut in Deir El Bahari. It is one of the rare specimens of the fine architecture of tombs in the period of the mediate kingdom. The tomb consists of two levels, a lower one and a higher level topped with a pyramidal shape.

The temple of Hatshepsut

The funerary temple of Hatshepsut is unique in shape for it consists of three levels linked together by means of two slanting platforms, it had been designed by her architect Senmut.

The most important level is the second one which contains on either side chambers for the gods Hathour and Anubis. As for the inscriptions found in the level there are some showing the holy birth of Hatshepsut on the right side. There are other inscriptions depicting the famous voyage to the land of Punt on the left side.

The temple of Hatshepsut



The temple of Hatshepsut

Hatshspsut portrayed as man

Two scenes from the voyage to land of Punt

COLOSSI OF MEMNON

On the western bank of the Nile are the colossi of Memnon. They are each about twenty meters high, and are all that is left of the funerary temple of Amenhotep III. The colossi had been named Memnon by the Greeks, (Memnon is name of a Greek hero mentioned in Homeros Odessa).

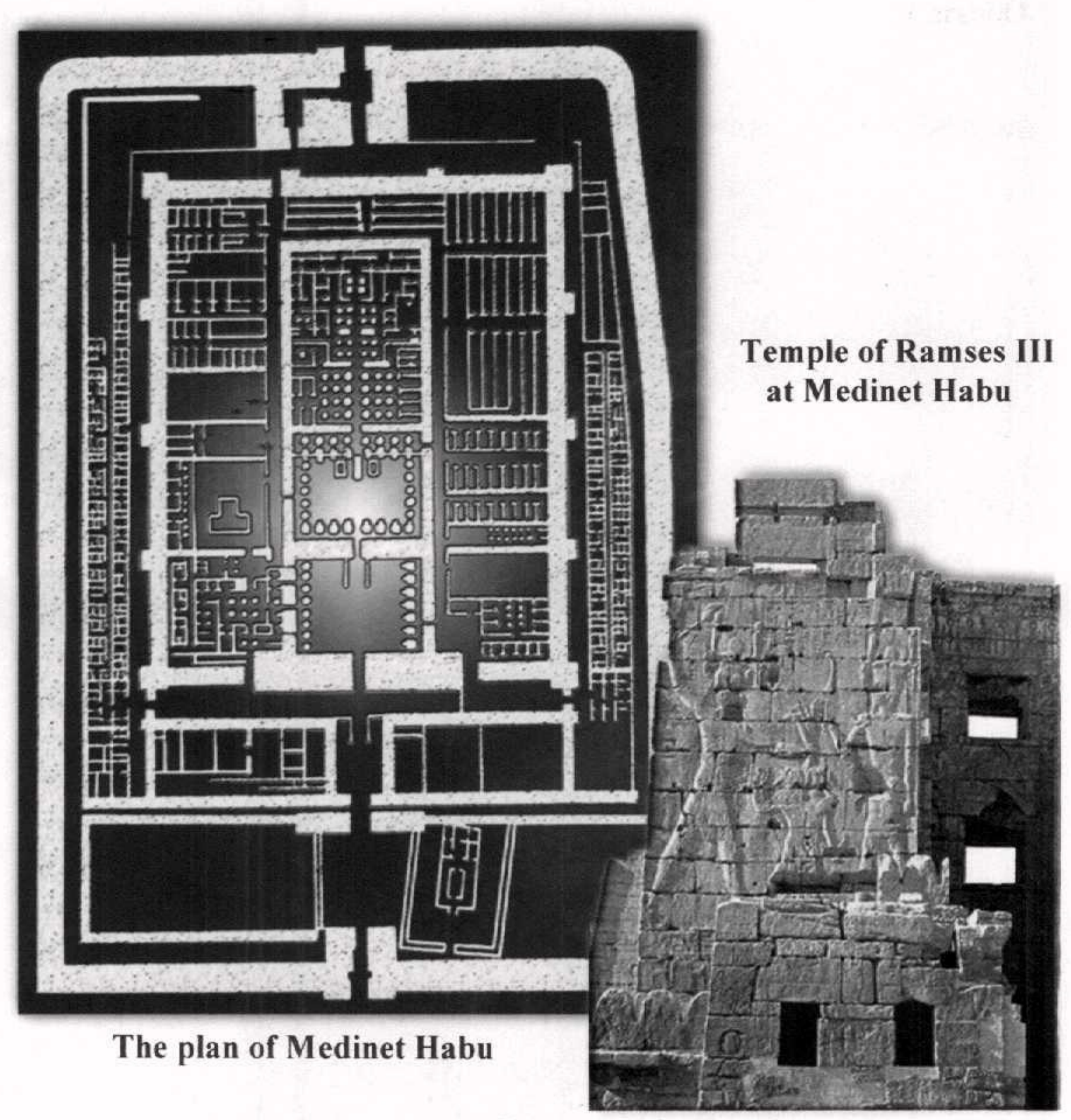


Colossi of Memnon

MEDINET HABU

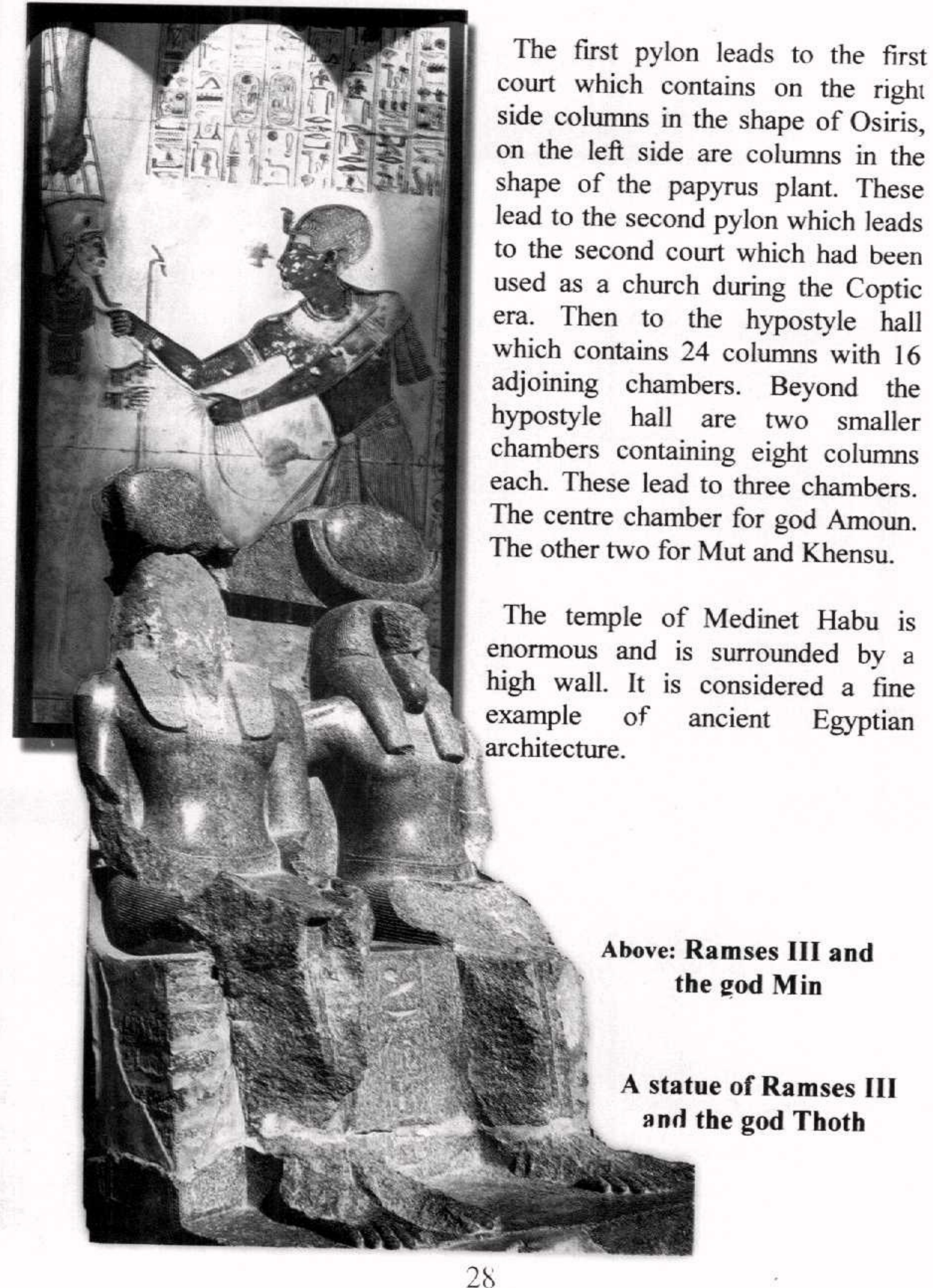
This temple had been built by Ramses III of the 20th dynasty.

The entrance to Medinet Habu is through a great named the high Ramses gate which leads on the right side to a temple dating back to the 18th dynasty. On the left side are funerary chambers of the 25th and 26th dynasties.



Temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu

The plan of Medinet Habu



The first pylon leads to the first court which contains on the right side columns in the shape of Osiris, on the left side are columns in the shape of the papyrus plant. These lead to the second pylon which leads to the second court which had been used as a church during the Coptic era. Then to the hypostyle hall which contains 24 columns with 16 adjoining chambers. Beyond the hypostyle hall are two smaller chambers containing eight columns each. These lead to three chambers. The centre chamber for god Amoun. The other two for Mut and Khensu.

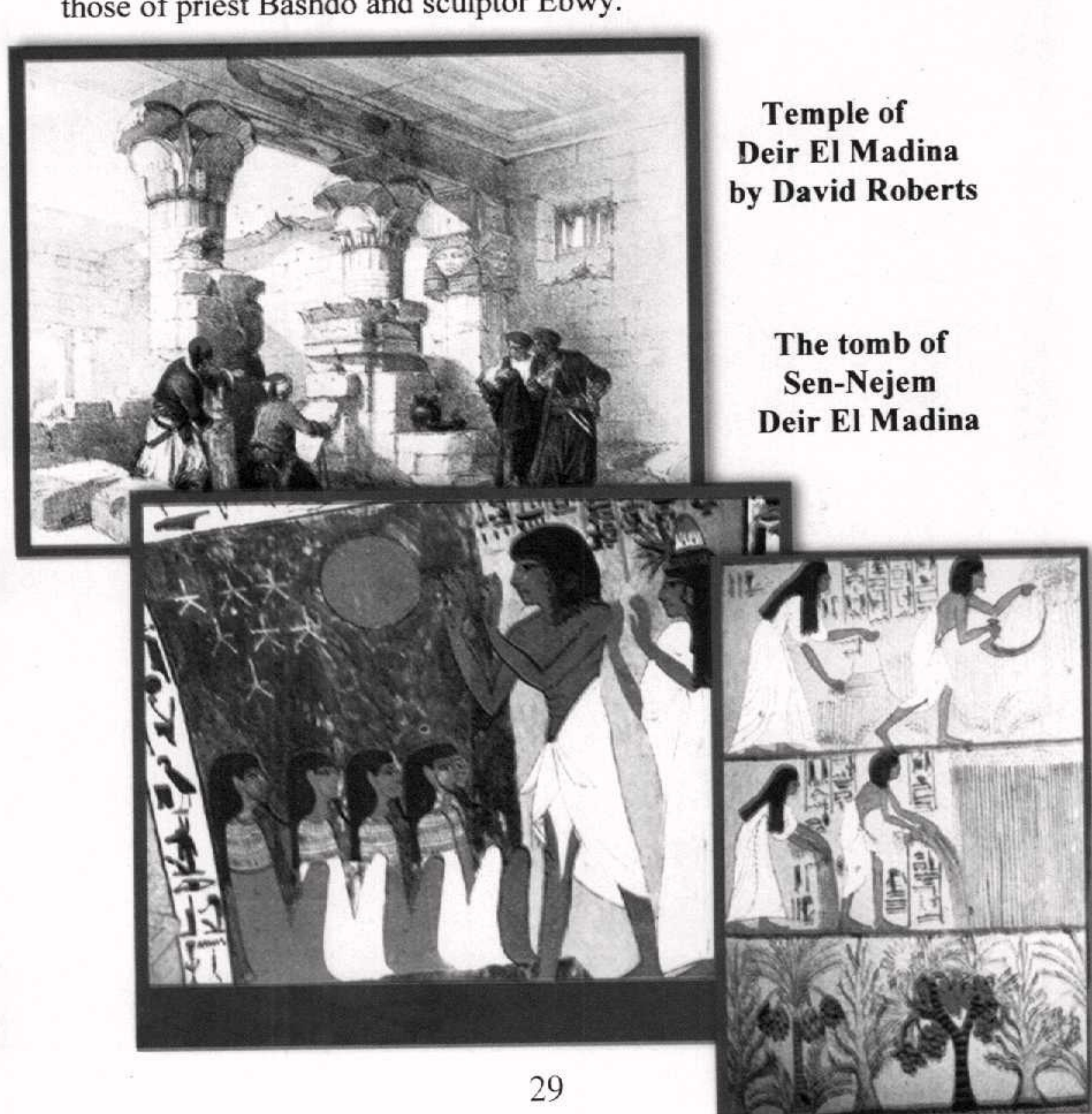
The temple of Medinet Habu is enormous and is surrounded by a high wall. It is considered a fine example of ancient Egyptian architecture.

Above: Ramses III and the god Min

A statue of Ramses III and the god Thoth

DEIR EL MADINA

Lies in the area between the Ramesseum temple and the valley of the queens. It had been erected in the 19th dynasty as burial ground for the workers and caretakers of the royal tombs. It contains about 50 tombs lavishly decorated with inscriptions on the walls. The area also contains a temple which dates back to the Ptolemic era, and which had been built for the goddess Hathour. One of the most famous tombs in Deir El Madina is that of the priest Sen-Nejem, the other two famous ones are those of priest Bashdo and sculptor Ebwy.



Temple of Deir El Madina by David Roberts

The tomb of Sen-Nejem Deir El Madina

Tombs of the nobles

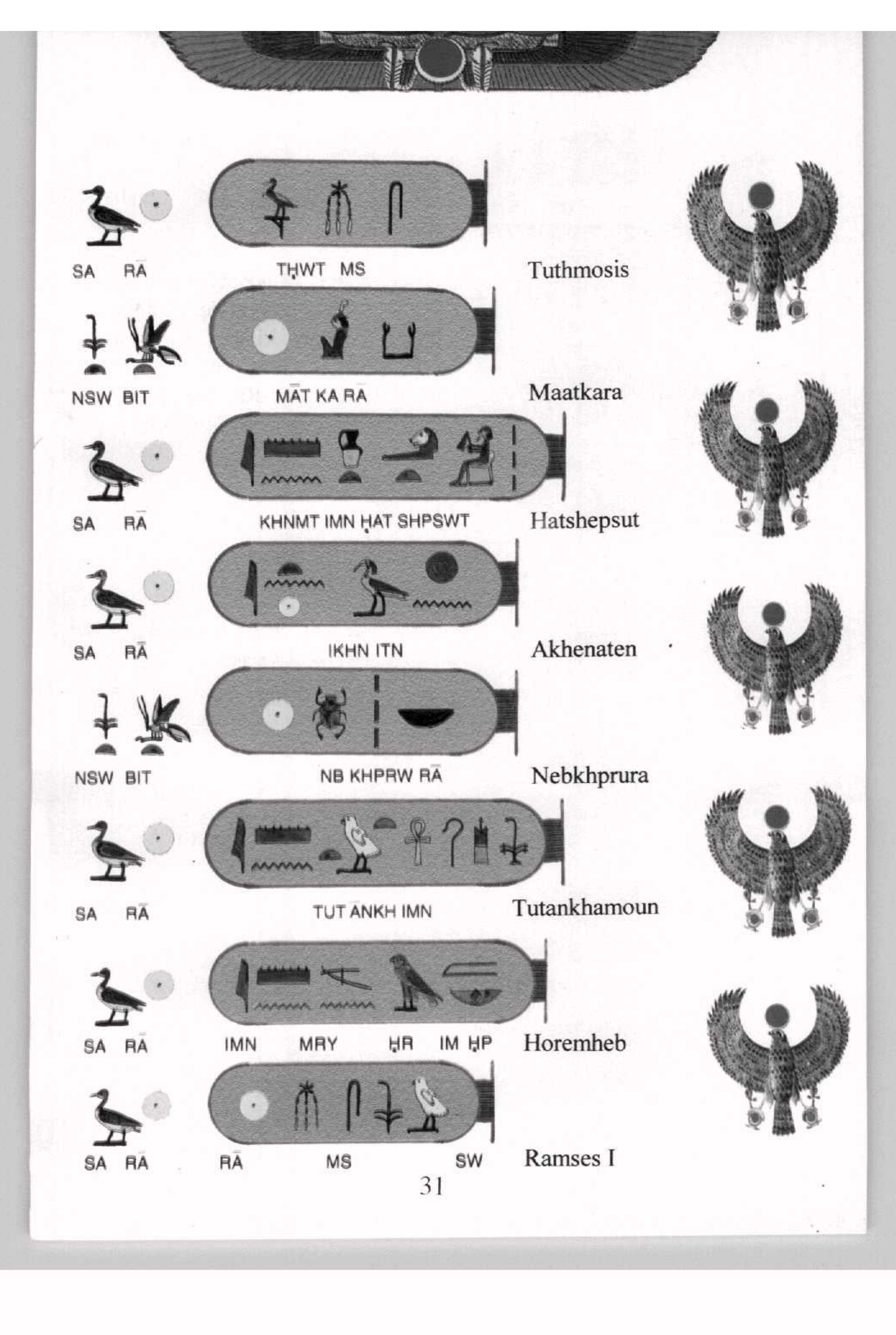
Most of those tombs on the western bank belong to the era of the new kingdom. Four hundred and eleven tombs of nobles have been discovered. Those tombs reflect traces of beauty and wealth but they lack the grandeur found in those of the kings. The most important of those tombs are the tomb of Rekhmi-Ra, the tomb of Ra-Mess, and that of Sen-Nefer.

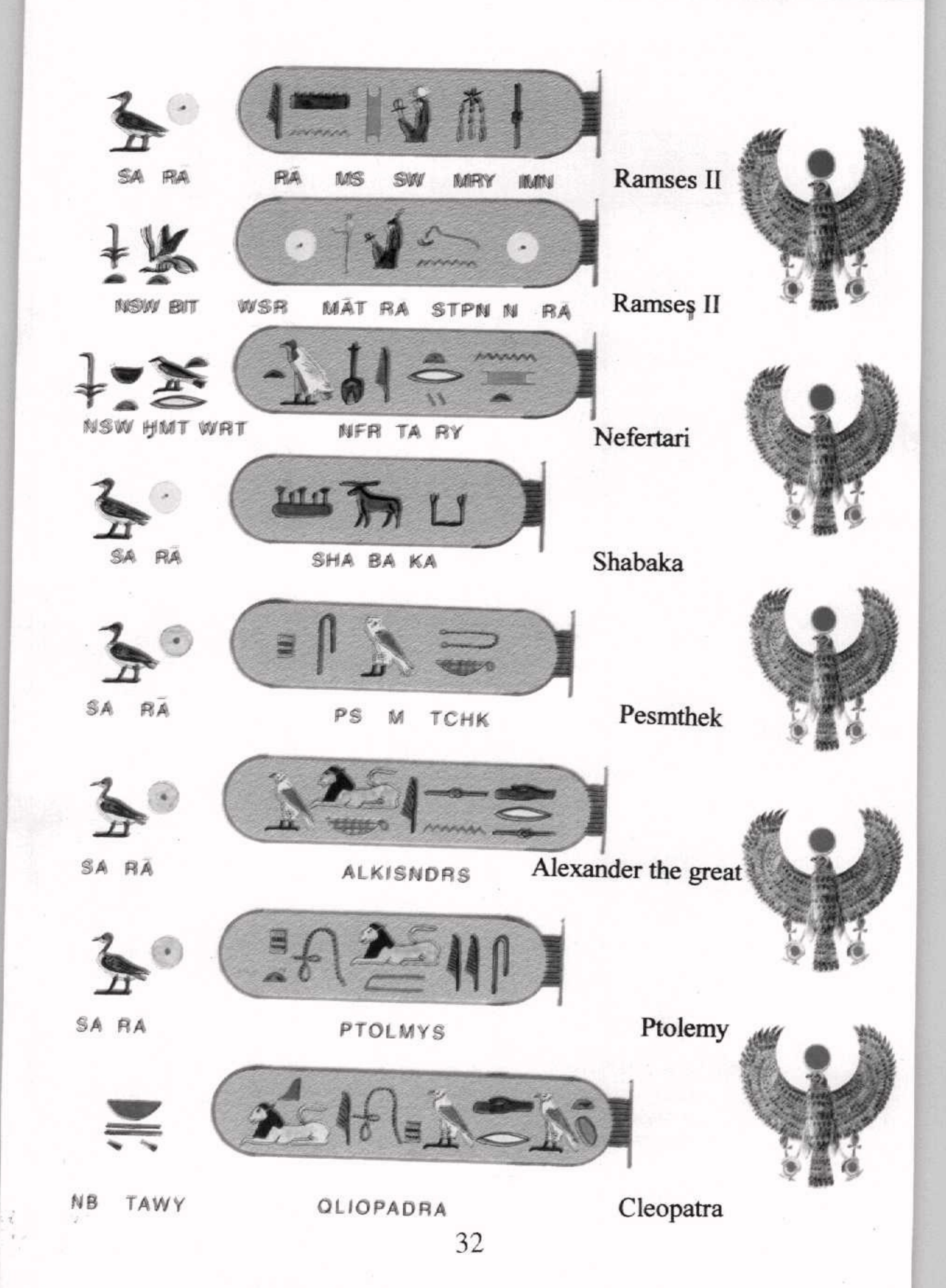


The statue of Sen-Nefer and his wife

Inscription from the tomb of Sen-Nefer




SA RĀ
TḤWT MS
Tuthmosis
NSW BIT
MĀT KA RĀ
Maatkara
SA RĀ
KHNMT IMN ḤAT SHPSWT
Hatshepsut
SA RĀ
IKHN ITN
Akhenaten
NSW BIT
NB KHPRW RĀ
Nebkhprura
SA RĀ
TUT ĀNKH IMN
Tutankhamoun
SA RĀ
IMN MRY ḤR IM ḤP
Horemheb
SA RĀ
RĀ MS SW
Ramses I


SA RA
RA MS SW MRY IMN
Ramses II
NSW BIT
WSR MĀT RA STPN N RĀ
Ramseş II
NSW ḤMT WRT
NFR TA RY
Nefertari
SA RĀ
SHA BA KA
Shabaka
SA RĀ
PS M TCHK
Pesmthek
SA RĀ
ALKISNDRS
Alexander the great
SA RA
PTOLMYS
Ptolemy
NB TAWY
QLIOPADRA
Cleopatra